

Agur's Wisdom For Kings

Proverbs 30:1-30:33

Puritan Reformed Church - Pastor David Reece

Lord's Day April 30th, Anno Domini 2023

OUTLINE OF PROVERBS

1) **Collection I**¹ - Chapters 1-9

a) **Focus Audience:** Child / Youth

b) **Length:** 9 Chapters

c) **Purpose:** 1:2-3 - 2 To know wisdom [**Hokmah**] and instruction [**Musar**], To perceive the words of understanding, 3 To receive the instruction [**Musar**] of success [**Haskel**], Justice [**Sedeq** - righteousness / truth in judgment], judgment [**Mishpat** - decision, choice], and equity [**Maysharim** - order/smoothness/beauty];

d) **Thesis:** 1:7 - 7 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

e) **Outline & Structure:**

1:1-7 - Introduction

A - 1:8-19 - The **Father's Invitation** vs. The **Gang's Invitation**

B - 1:20-33 - **Wisdom's Rebuke** to the simple

C - 2:1-22 - The **Father Warns** against evil men and the unchaste woman

D - 3:1-4:27 - **The Father Commands** that teaching be heeded

D' - 5:1-6:35 - **The Father Warns** against the unchaste woman

C' - 7:1-27 - The **Father Warns** against the Woman Folly

B' - 8:1-36 - **Wisdom's Invitation** to the simple

A' - 9:1-18 - **Wisdom's Invitation** vs. **Folly's Invitation** to the simple

¹ Collection I outline Modified from Bruce Waltke NICOT: Proverbs - page 12

2) **Collection II - 10:1-22:16 - The 375 Proverbs of Solomon**

- a) **Focus Audience:** Young Man / Adult
- b) **Length:** 12.5 Chapters
- c) **Outline & Structure:**

“This collection is commonly divided into sections A (10:1–15:33) and B (16:1–22:17). However, 15:30–33 is better analyzed as a prologue to section B. The proverbs of section A are mostly antithetic while those of section B are mostly synthetic and show a much greater concern for the king and future functionaries at the royal court.”²

3) **Collection III - 22:17-24:22 - The Thirty Sayings of the Wise**

- a) **Focus Audience:** Young Man / Adult
- b) **Length:** 2 Chapters

“Collection III is commonly referred to as the “Thirty Sayings of the Wise.” Its own preamble (22:17–21) debatably refers to thirty sayings (22:20). Its preamble and especially its first ten sayings have striking similarities with the thirty sayings of the Egyptian Instruction of Amenemope (ca. 1186–1069 B.C.) ... The style of Collection III differs from that of Collection II. Gone are the short, pithy epigrams of Collection II. In their place are more flowing shorter sayings, often in pairs consisting of admonition and motivating reason.”³

4) **Collection IV - 24:23-34 - Further Sayings of the Wise**

- a) **Focus Audience:** Young Man / Adult / Leader Transition
- b) **Length:** 0.5 Chapters

Some Commentaries Say that Collections III & IV are one Collection, but that Collection IV is more of an appendix to the 30 Sayings of the wise to be mastered after the 30 sayings are mastered - this supports the same application of one being more for the younger man with less authority and the appendix or Collection IV being for the more mature man - This collection or two collections serve as a bridge into the more mature middle management Collection.

² Bruce K. Waltke and Ivan D. V. De Silva, *Proverbs: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 3–4.

³ *Ibid.*

5) **Collection V - 25:1-29:27 - More Proverbs of Solomon from Hezekiah's Men**

a) **Focus Audience:** Father / Leader

b) **Length:** 5 Chapters

c) **Outline & Structure:**

25:1 - Superscription

Part 1 - 25:2-27:27

Comparative Proverbs - Except Antithetical Proverbs in 25:2, 27:6,7,12

25:2-27 - Conflict Between the Righteous & Wicked in the Halls of Power

25:28-26:28 - 7 Types of Corrupted People

25:28 - The Undisciplined

26:1-12 - The Fool

26:13-16 - The Sluggard

26:17-19 - The Busybody & The Joker (Troublemaker)

26:20-22 - The Slanderer

26:23-28 - The Nemesis

27:1-22 - Friends & Friendship

27:23-27 - Capitalist Poetry - Managing Capital & Income Streams

Part 2 - 28:1-29:27 - Power, The Righteous, & The Wicked

33 Antithetical Contrast Proverbs - Pillars Contrasting Righteous and Wicked

A - 28:1 - Introduction

B - 28:2-11 - Instruction & Rule

C - 28:12 - Bridge

D - 28:13-27 - God, Rule, & Working for Gain

E - 28:28 - Bridge

F - 29:1 - Center Proverb

E' - 29:2 - Bridge

D' - 29:3-15 - Rulers interacting with the Poor & Humble

C' - 29:16 - Bridge

B' - 29:17-26 - God's means, the Ruler, & the Limits of power

A' - 29:27 - Conclusion

6) **Collection VI - 30:1-33 - The Sayings of Agur Son of Jakeh**

- a) **Focus Audience:** Father / Leader
- b) **Length:** 1 Chapter
- c) **Outline & Structure:**

The introduction and conclusion teach I AM's people to submit to both the authority of God's word (vv. 1-9) and to the king (vv. 32-33) and the sayings in the main body teach to renounce greed and hubris and to live within divinely established moral and social boundaries.⁴

Part 1 - 30:1-9 - Introduction: Agur's Confessions and Prayers

A) 30:1-6 - Epistemological Confession

B) 30:7-9 - Existential Prayers

30:7 - Double Request For a Double Prayer

30:8a - Keep me from Lying & Liars

30:8b-9 - Keep me from Excess & Poverty

Part 2 - 30:10-31 - Main Body: 7 Numerical Sayings:

A) 30:10-16 - First Group: Renouncing Covetousness

30:10 - Introduction: Beware of Slandering

30:11-14 - Saying 1: The Greedy Generation

30:15a - Saying 2: The Leech - Insatiable

30:15b-16 - Saying 3: 4 Things - Insatiable

B) 30:17-31 - Second Group: God's Social Order

30:17 - Introduction: Renouncing Rebellion

30:18-20 - Saying 4: 4 Ways of Wonder, 1 Way of Woe

30:21-23 - Saying 5: 4 Revolutionaries

30:24-28 - Saying 6: 4 Force Multipliers

30:29-31 - Saying 7: 4 Reputation Boosters

Part 3 - 30:32-33 - Conclusion: A Warning Not to Exalt Oneself⁵

7) **Collection VII - 31:1-31:31 - The Sayings of Lemuel**

- a) **Focus Audience:** Father / Leader / King
- b) **Length:** 1 Chapter

⁴ Bruce K. Waltke and Ivan D. V. De Silva, Proverbs: A Shorter Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 411

⁵ Outline Modified from - Bruce K. Waltke and Ivan D. V. De Silva, Proverbs: A Shorter Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 411-19.

Proverbs 30:1-33 - Collection VI - The Sayings of Agur Son of Jakeh

1) 30:1-9 - Introduction: Agur's Preliminary Confessions & Prayers

a) 30:1-6 - The Epistemological Confession of Agur

30:1 The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, his utterance [burden, oracle]. This man [Gibor] declared to Ithiel—to Ithiel and Ucal:

- 1) Agur - “Collector / Gather” - Solomon - like “Koheleth” (the Assembler / Caller / Preacher) in Ecclesiastes - He collects wisdom to tell to the assembly.
- 2) Jakeh - “Spitter / Obedient / Guard / Keeper” - David
- 3) Ithiel - “God with me / with me is God / God has arrived / Signs of God / coming of God” - equivalent to “Emmanuel” - “God with us”
- 4) Ucal - “the mighty One / Devourer / verb - to be consumed”
- 5) **“The Words of the Gatherer [Solomon], son of the Keeper [David], the Oracle, The Confession of the Strong Man: To God with us, to God with us, and consumed [eaten].”**

2 Surely I am more stupid [brutish, beast like] than *any* [remove “any”] man [ish], And do not have the understanding [binat] of a man [adam].

3 I neither learned wisdom [hokma]

Nor have knowledge [da’at] of the Holy One.

- 6) V. 2 - Hyperbole/Startling Truth to draw attention to what humanity is about:
 - a) “I am more like a beast than a man, and do not have the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have knowledge of the Holy One.”
 - b) The mind differentiates man from beast. The right use of the mind to possess and apply right content [knowledge], right purpose [holiness], and right choice [righteousness] is to fulfill our call to work and keep and exercise authority rightly as prophet, priest, and kings. This is humanness.
 - i) **Understanding** - To possess the meaning of a thing in one’s mind, to have a right awareness of the content of a term/proposition, to accurately grasp the definition or meaning of a truth claim.
 - ii) **Wisdom** - Knowledge of the Good and of the means to the Good.
 - iii) **Knowledge** - Rationally Justified True Belief - True Belief with an Account of how the belief is certain to be true.
 - c) Seeking to understand things - the meaning of things would, when rightly done, show the necessity of Wisdom and thus the necessity of the knowledge of the Holy One.
 - d) The knowledge of God and the Knowledge of Self - “The Double Knowledge”

4 Who has ascended into heaven, or descended?

Who has gathered the wind in His fists?

Who has bound the waters in a garment?

Who has established all the ends of the earth?

**What is His name, and what is His Son's name,
If you know?**

- 7) Have you gone up to heaven to obtain the Word of Heaven? Have you come down from heaven to bring the Word down? Who has? OR Who will?
 - a) God brings a Word to us by Direct Revelation and by Prophets.
 - b) Angels come as ministering Spirits and sometimes carry messages.
 - c) Christ has descended to earth from Heaven, and He has ascended back to Heaven and sits now at the right hand of the Father and has sent His Holy Spirit.
- 8) Wind in fists, Waters in a garment, established the ends of the earth
 - a) Only God
 - b) Synecdoches of the Tripartite creation
 - i) Winds - represent the Heavens
 - ii) Waters - represent the Seas
 - iii) Ends of Earth - represent the Land
- 9) What is His name, What is His Son's name, If you know?
 - a) His Name - I am that I am.
 - b) His Son's Name - Jesus.
 - c) We know because of Divine Propositional Revelation - A Word from heaven, Words from Heaven.

5 Every word of God is pure [tested, refined, found pure];

He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.

6 Do not add to His words,

Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

- 10) Every word of God is pure - No error, every word is pure, every letter is pure.
God's Word gives knowledge without any admixture of error. Jesus Argues for and proves the resurrection from the tense of a verb.
- 11) God's Word is powerful - God protects those trust Him/His Word (no difference)
- 12) Do not Add to His words, do not go beyond what is written. His Words are sufficient. If you add to them God will rebuke you, and He will cause your addition to be shown for the lie that it is. #FalseProphets
- 13) Sola Scriptura - Regulative Principle of Doctrine - Sufficiency of Scripture

b) The Existential Prayers of Agur - 30:7-9

i) 30:7 - Double Request For a Double Prayer

7 Two things I request of You

(Deprive me not before I die):

14) Two Requests/Petitions

15) Request repeated in more emphatic form - emphatic repetition - boldly coming before the throne of grace. This relates to the “Amen” of prayer. Every Amen is a repetition as a second witness, and the mediation of Christ is a third witness.

16) Two or Three asking for a lawful thing in Christ’s name is very powerful.

ii) 30:8a - Keep me from Lying & Liars

8 Remove falsehood and lies far from me;

15) Help us to Hallow your name by being zealous for truth.

16) Your Will Be Done - Keep us from lying

17) Lead us not into Temptation - remove liars and external lies from me

iii) 30:8b-9 - Keep me from Excess & Poverty

Give me neither poverty nor riches—

Feed me with the food allotted to me;

9 Lest I be full and deny You,

And say, “Who is the Lord?”

Or lest I be poor and steal,

And profane the name of my God.

18) Give us this day our daily bread.

19) Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

20) Being Full of Bread - The Temptation of Trusting in Mammon

a) Sodom was full of Bread

b) Forgetfulness toward the God who gives the gifts

c) We should be grateful and apply His word, pray in rejoicing, and sing psalms for praise in joy.

d) The desire to use money as we see fit and be as God - being a law to ourselves - is the danger of having many resources

21) Being Poor - The Temptation of not trusting God to provide through lawful means and trusting to provide for self through unlawful means and the arm of the flesh.

22) This stealing profanes the name of God because we as covenant people have the mark/name of God on us visibly if we are crutch members, and invisibly if we are elect.

23) How to avoid both extremes:

- a) Against Excess - Do not Hoard. Deploy Capital. Consistently take reasonable risk, and trust God. Do not be a gambler. Be an Investor. Risk cannot be avoided. Risk should not be increased without an increase in potential or actual benefit. Pray for wisdom and strength.
- i) Tithe
 - ii) Hospitality - not entertaining
 - iii) Children
 - iv) Invest in income producing property - companies, real estate, machines, tools
 - v) Invest in getting more working time by hiring Servants
 - vi) Give to others - not the same as bribes or buying favor.
 - vii) Freewill Offerings for good work - Discipleship and Evangelism and mercy work.
 - viii) How much is too much? As much as you can manage well and serve others with. If you do not know how to manage it all, then hire help, and then use excess for liberality and Offerings and investment to be managed by others.
 - ix) Enough to consume for a year is not too much - look at the sabbath year.
 - x) Enough to consume for two years is not too much - Sabbath year followed by jubilee year.
 - (1) These amounts encouraged.
 - xi) Enough to rest for 7 years? That would make the years between the sabbath years not necessary for work - this is certainly hoarding.
 - xii) What should be done? Make less profit? No. Deploy the profits for good works, and take on increased responsibility through service that is God glorifying (not self glorifying).
- b) Against Poverty - Do not be Idle. Work 6 days a week to gain, improve, manage, beautify, or enjoy blessings. Work hard, not with eyeservice, but as to the Lord - Coram Deo. Pray.
- i) The Love of Oils and Wine
 - ii) The Love of Women and giving strength to them,
 - iii) The love of Play and laughter,
 - iv) Bad company - the Gang and the Harlot
 - v) Honoring Self before getting a servant, building the house before getting the fields in order.

2) 30:10-31 - Main Body: 7 Numerical Sayings of Agur

“Agur’s numerical sayings exhibit both a structural and thematic unity. A preliminary overview of Agur’s numerical sayings reveal an alternating AB/A’B’ pattern:

- A Single line saying proscribing overturning the social order 10
- B Three verse initial untitled sayings proscribing greed 11–16
- A’ Single line sayings proscribing overturning the social order 17
- B’ Four verse initial titled sayings proscribing breaking boundaries 18–31”⁶

a) 30:10-16 - First Group: Renouncing Covetousness

i) 30:10 - Introduction: Beware of Slandering

**10 Do not malign [slander] a servant [ebed] to his master [adon],
Lest he curse you, and you be found guilty.**

24) Servant - Heb. ebed - Slave, Servant, Advisor, Minister, Official

25) Master - Heb. adon - Lord, Master, God

26) A Justified Curse that will bring curse [relational, wealth, or health harms].

27) Slander motivated by covetousness about a good name or the desire to see unjust harm out of hatred. 10th & 9th Commandments.

(1) 30:11-14 - Saying 1: The Greedy Generation

**11 There is a generation that curses its father,
And does not bless its mother.**

**12 There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes,
Yet is not washed from its filthiness.**

**13 There is a generation—oh, how lofty are their eyes!
And their eyelids are lifted up [In arrogance].**

**14 There is a generation whose teeth are like swords,
And whose fangs are like knives,
To devour the poor from off the earth,
And the needy from among men.**

28) Four Types of Covetousness

29) Curses Fathers - does not bless Mothers

a) Capital Cure to Curse Parents - Exod. 21:17; Deut. 27:16

30) Self righteous - filthy, unwashed, unrighteous

31) Self Important in the work they set for themselves [eyes set on things that are too lofty for them - not willing to serve in low things] - arrogance [carry head high]

32) Violent - oppressors

(2) 30:15a - Saying 2: The Leech - Insatiable

⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, The Book of Proverbs, Chapters 15–31, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 481.

15 The leech has two daughters—

Give and Give!

- 33) Leeches are animals that only take the life from others.
- 34) Vampires are a horror creature that shows the same thing.
- 35) If a person will not be reciprocal or grateful, then the person is a leech.
- 36) If you want everyone to give things to you, but you are not serving others, then you need to identify yourself as a leech and look for ways to serve.
- 37) Being a leech is miserable. Generosity rebounds by the blessing of God.
- 38) Value is produced for yourself by producing value for others.
- 39) Remove burdens from others. Free them. Take over work at the bottom of the ladder. Work your way up by showing skill and diligence and reliability.
- 40) People want to serve by teaching, but until they show fruitfulness in other areas they ought not to focus on teaching and should rather serve in other ways.

“The greed of the evil generation morphs into a second saying about greed. The parasitic horse leech has two organs: one to suck blood, the other to attach itself to its host. It is personified as a mother with two daughters who demand, “Give!” “Give!” The saying warns against the danger of tolerating a parasite. The double-sucking leech symbolizes either an individual of inordinate lusts or a wicked person (e.g., a thief or a welfare scammer), both of whom suck out the life and wealth of a society. The insatiable appetite of the parasite must be quickly eliminated; otherwise it multiplies and does ever more damage.”⁷

(3) 30:15b-16 - Saying 3: 4 Things - Insatiable

There are three things that are never satisfied,

Four never say, “Enough!”:

16 The grave [Or Sheol],

The barren womb,

The earth that is not satisfied with water—

And the fire never says, “Enough!”

- 41) Destructive Force and Productive force followed by productive force and destructive force - A, B, B', A'
- 42) The Grave - We are saved from death, but death would take us and never give us back were it not for Christ's victory over the grave.
- 43) The Barren Womb - Every womb would be barren were it not for God's opening

⁷ Bruce K. Waltke and Ivan D. V. De Silva, *Proverbs: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021), 420.

the womb and giving life.

44) The Earth - the more water the more lush

45) Fire - consumes all flammable material that enters it - when water ceases

b) 30:17-31 - Second Group: God's Social Order

i) 30:17 - Introduction: Renouncing Rebellion

**17 The eye that mocks his father,
And scorns obedience to his mother,
The ravens of the valley will pick it out,
And the young eagles will eat it.**

(1) 30:18-20 - Saying 4: 4 Ways of Wonder, 1 Way of Woe

**18 There are three things which are too wonderful for me,
Yes, four which I do not understand:
19 The way of an eagle in the air,
The way of a serpent on a rock,
The way of a ship in the midst of the sea [Lit. heart of the sea],
And the way of a man with a virgin.
20 This is the way of an adulterous woman:
She eats and wipes her mouth,
And says, "I have done no wickedness."**

(2) 30:21-23 - Saying 5: 4 Revolutionaries

**21 For three things the earth is perturbed,
Yes, for four it cannot bear up:
22 For a servant when he reigns,
A fool when he is filled with food,
23 A hateful [Or hated] woman when she is married,
And a maidservant who succeeds her mistress.**

(3) 30:24-28 - Saying 6: 4 Force Multipliers

24 There are four things which are little on the earth,
But they are exceedingly wise [But they teach the wisemen]:
25 The ants are a people not strong,
Yet they prepare their food in the summer;
26 The rock badgers [rock hyraxes] are a feeble folk,
Yet they make their homes in the crags;
27 The locusts have no king,
Yet they all advance in ranks;
28 The spider [Or lizard] skillfully grasps with its hands,
And it is in kings' palaces.

(4) 30:29-31 - Saying 7: 4 Reputation Boosters

29 There are three things which are majestic in pace,
Yes, four which are stately in walk:
30 A lion, which is mighty among beasts
And does not turn away from any;
31 A greyhound [Or perhaps strutting rooster, lit. girded of waist],
A male goat also,
And a king whose troops are with him.

3) 30:32-33 - Conclusion: A Warning Not to Exalt Oneself

32 If you have been foolish in exalting yourself,
Or if you have devised evil, put your hand on your mouth.
33 For as the churning of milk produces butter,
And wringing the nose produces blood,
So the forcing of wrath produces strife.